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A Little Excitement

*A PLAY FOR GIRLS
IN THREE ACTS*

BY
GERTRUDE KNEVELS

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CHARACTERS.

MISS SOPHIA SNATCHEM.....*Head of the School*
MISS ARCHER (M. DE BONBON) *A teacher who is*
not so prim as she looks
NORA.....*An Irish servant girl*
MIKE.....*A young policeman, in love with Nora*
TONY.....*The "Naughtiest girl in school"*
MAUDE.....*Tony's dearest friend*
DOLLY.....*Also her dearest friend*
EVIE BLAKE.....*A love-sick young thing*

ROSALIE
 CLARE
 MILLICENT
 HILDA
 MADGE
 ETHEL

} *School-girls.*

ACT I. Morning. Arrival of the Heiress.
ACT II. Afternoon. The Dancing Lesson.
ACT III. Evening. The Mid-night Feast.

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COSTUMES.

The costumes for the play should involve little or no expense. If it is not possible to borrow a policeman's uniform for MIKE, he can wear dark trousers, a dark blue coat with collar turned up and ornamented with gold buttons. A helmet can be easily imitated out of card-board covered with cloth. He should wear white cotton gloves and carry a policeman's club. A reddish wig is advisable. This part can with perfect propriety be taken by a girl.

NORA. ACT I. A red wig. Light colored blouse turned in at neck. Very full skirt of gay plaid gingham or striped calico, short enough to show white cotton stockings and large clumsy boots with half of the buttons missing. Short jacket of antique design and absurdly trimmed sailor hat. Carpet bag and umbrella. Later, when NORA is attired as ANGIE, she puts on DOLLY's coat turned inside out and MAUDIE's hat hind-side-before. Face is shrouded in pink automobile veil and white gloves thrust on hands.

ACT. II. A silk dress much trimmed and both too tight and too short. A sash and ribbons fail to hide deficiencies. Necklace and bracelets. Hair in a stiff braid tied with huge bow.

Later, at the dancing lesson, NORA changes to white dress like those of other girls but too short in sleeves and skirt, and evidently a misfit. Her hair is absurdly frizzed and tied with bright green

ribbon. If preferred, NORA need not make this change of costume, but may retain dress worn at beginning of act.

ACT III. Same white dress covered by Dolly's coat and Maudie's hat and veil. Carries carpet bag so stuffed that it opens, fan, gloves, mirror, etc., falling out.

MISS SNATCHEM. ACT I. Old-maidish costume of purple or dark gray. Neat white collar, large brooch, black silk apron. Hair dressed primly in old-fashioned style.

ACT II. Black, green, or drab silk costume with lace collar.

ACT III. Striped flannel wrapper. Hair in curl papers under night cap. Carpet slippers. Carries poker.

MISS ARCHER. ACT I. White shirtwaist and black skirt, neat tie. Hair very plainly dressed, spectacles.

ACT II. Tight black frock or cutaway coat, light trousers, curly black wig, and black waxed mustache. Pumps.

ACT III. Same costume as ACT II, with addition of soft black hat and over-coat or cloak on arm.

TONY. ACT I. White sailor blouse and blue serge skirt. Hair tied back with black ribbon.

ACT II. White muslin dress and Roman sash and hair ribbon.

ACT III. Cape or cloak over white blouse, gypsy sash and blue serge skirt or gymnasium bloomers. Boy's cap with feather. Hair floating.

EVIE. ACT I. Sailor blouse and blue serge skirt. Hair in long curls.

ACT II. White frock and blue sash. Blue beads.

ACT III. Picture hat, floating veil. Cloak or evening wrap over white dress. Long gloves, a handbag.

DOLLY. ACT I. Sailor blouse and serge skirt. Later, on re-entrance, she wears long coat and tam o'shanter cap.

ACT II. White dress, pink sash, and ribbons.

ACT III. Pink kimono. Lace boudoir cap.

MAUDIE. ACT I. Sailor blouse and skirt.

ACT II. White frock and red sash, etc.

ACT III. Blue wrapper. Lace boudoir cap, hair in long braids. Worsted slippers.

THE GIRLS. ACT I. Sailor blouses (white) and short serge skirts.

ACT II. White dresses, colored sashes and ribbons. Dancing slippers.

ACT III. Light colored kimonos. Some may wear lace boudoir caps and all have hair loose or in braids. Bedroom slippers. On re-entrance for "burglar-hunt" they should be armed with umbrellas, tennis racquets, golf sticks, hair brushes, etc.

SCENERY.

There is but one scene throughout, study-room of the school. If it is not convenient to have desks for girls, they may sit at long table. Teacher's desk at left. Wardrobe or door supposed to lead to closet at right. Entrances right and left. Small mirror on wall. High screen or high-backed sofa at left. Maps and pictures on wall. A black-board, etc.

MUSIC.

During the first part of Dancing Lesson, Act II, a march or two-step should be played. Later a waltz. If not convenient to have orchestra, a Victrola may be played on stage.

A Little Excitement

ACT I.

SCENE:—*Study-room of MISS SNATCHEM'S School for Girls at Squeeks-kill-on-the-Hudson. MISS ARCHER sits at desk, writing. Girls in easy attitudes at desks. MAUDE munches chocolates, DOLLY curls hair round pencil, EVIE is absorbed in yellow-backed novel partly hidden behind atlas. All are idling.*

MISS ARCHER. (*Looking up and taking in situation*) Girls, would you like a new sensation?

GIRLS. Yes, Miss Archer! (*All straighten up and look interested except EVIE who continues to read*)

MISS ARCHER. (*Sarcastically*) Try studying—just for a change! Evie Blake! (*She crosses and takes book from EVIE*) Give me that book.

EVIE. Oh, *please* let me have it! Only *three* pages more and I'll know who married the Count!

MISS ARCHER. Indeed I shall do nothing of the sort. You are getting more silly and sentimental every day of your life, Evie Blake—just from reading this silly, love-sick stuff.

EVIE. (*Rolling eyes and trying to look romantic*)

Love—ah love! What a wonderful word that is—
(*Voice outside. EVIE is jerked into seat by two of the girls and MISS SNATCHEM enters*)

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Speaking to some one outside*) Tell the new servant to wait in the hall. I have no time to interview her now. (*To girls*) Ah, young ladies! (*Girls rise respectfully, then sit*) Miss Archer! It seems almost a pity to disturb such industry, but you may be pleased to hear that in honor of the arrival of our new pupil, Miss Gott-rich, I have decided to give you all a half-holiday.

GIRLS. Thank you, Miss Snatchem!

MISS ARCHER. You are quite sure that Miss Gottrich is coming this morning?

MISS SNATCHEM. Would you have me doubt the word of Antoinette, her cousin? By the way, I do not see Antoinette here?

MISS ARCHER. Antoinette was seized with that peculiar faintness which so often troubles her during the algebra lesson. I excused her, but—if I'm not mistaken—that is her step in the hall now—
(*Loud noise outside of a fall, apologies, and hearty laughter. Enter TONY, laughing so that she can hardly stand upright*)

TONY. Ha, ha! Did you hear me tumbling over the number tens of that object in the hall? (*Sees MISS SNATCHEM*) Oh, Miss Snatchem, I beg your pardon!

MISS SNATCHEM. Antoinette, your conduct is positively inexcusable. If it were not for the esteem and affection which I have for your admirable mother and all your very influential family, I should be tempted to send you——

TONY. (*Pretending fright*) Oh, Miss Snatchem!

MISS SNATCHEM. To send you to bed! Miss Archer, you may now dismiss your pupils. (*MISS ARCHER rings bell on desk, girls file out, TONY mak-*

ing naughty face at MISS SNATCHEM) Please follow me to my office in half an hour, Miss Archer. I trust by that time you will be able to give me definite information about the arrival of the new dancing master. *(She turns to go)*

MISS ARCHER. *(Despairingly)* But I've already told you——

MISS SNATCHEM. I shall expect him this afternoon at four o'clock. Surely, Miss Archer, I need not again remind you how much depends upon our making the proper impression on this Miss Gottrich the first day of her arrival. During our present——er——financial crisis, the question of getting and *keeping* pupils of such wealth and distinction is an important one indeed. I may say that on it hangs the fate of the School! *(Exit MISS SNATCHEM. TONY enters at opposite door, takes MISS ARCHER by arm, and leads her front)*

TONY. I say, Archie, old girl, what about this new dancing master?

MISS ARCHER. *(Sternly)* Now, Tony, you——

TONY. *(Patting her on the back)* There, there now, don't have a fit! You can keep your secret from the other girls and be as prim and proper as you please, but *I* know you aren't really the stiff old maid Snatchy would like you to be. If she didn't make you wear your hair like that *(ruffles it)* and insist on those ridiculous spectacles *(taking them off and trying them on her own nose)*, I believe you wouldn't be half bad looking. Do you remember the day last week when you practised the fox trot before the parlor mirror?

MISS ARCHER. *(Looking about her in fright)* Oh, Tony—hush!

TONY. *I* saw you! Now you've got to promise to show us girls the new steps.

MISS ARCHER. But Miss Snatchem doesn't approve of the new dances.

TONY. That's so. Well, perhaps this new dancing master will insist on teaching them.

MISS ARCHER. (*Impatiently*) There isn't any new dancing master! Monsieur de Bonbon telephoned this morning that he must throw up the engagement because Miss Snatchem refuses to pay the salary he requires. I've been trying all morning to get up courage to break the news to her. She'll be frightfully disappointed because she counted on the impression his first lesson would make on your cousin, Miss Gottrich. By the way, Tony darling, are you *really* certain that Miss Gottrich is coming to-day? It seems so strange she should not have written to Miss Snatchem.

TONY. (*Carelessly*) Don't know—can't say, I'm sure. But, listen, Archie, about the dancing master—I believe I've got a plan. If it succeeds it will really help Miss Snatchem, and if it fails—well, anyhow it will mean what we're all dying for in this dull hole—a little excitement!

MISS ARCHER. (*Yawning and throwing herself in chair*) Excitement? In this place? Impossible!

TONY. Not so utterly—when *I'm* around! Let me give you a piece of news. Monsieur de Bonbon is coming. In fact *he is here now!*

MISS ARCHER. Here *now?* Are you crazy?

TONY. Part of him is sitting on your chair and part of him is here! (*She runs to closet and returns with man's black overcoat and soft hat; takes black mustache from pocket of her dress. She forces MISS ARCHER into coat, rams hat on her head, sticks mustache on face and leads her to glass*) There! Allow me—(*Courtesying*) Our new dancing master, M. Pierre de Bonbon.

MISS ARCHER. Tony, what madness is this? Do you actually mean that I——

TONY. I mean that at three-thirty *you* are put to bed with a sick headache. At four precisely Monsieur de Bonbon marches up the steps of Miss Snatchem's Select Academy for Young Ladies. He comes, he sees, he conquers, sweeping all before him like Cæsar, Alexander, Hannibal—any of those old stiffs! Snatchy is delighted! The girls tumble head over heels in love with him! Everybody's happy! On the stroke of six he disappears like the darling little black-mustached Cinderella he is! Nobody suspects, we've all had a glorious time, and—a little excitement! (*She grabs MISS ARCHER by both hands and whirls her around*)

MISS ARCHER. (*Out of breath*) Of—course—you—know—it's—*quite* impossible. I—I've taken a man's part in theatricals at home—I can't deny it would be fun to play a trick on those silly girls who think I'm such a stick—especially on that love-sick Evie! But if Miss Snatchem should find out——

TONY. (*Impatiently*) She won't find out. Haven't you told me you mean to leave at the end of the term anyway?

MISS ARCHER. Yes, my salary hasn't been paid for months, and——

TONY. And isn't likely to be. The school is running down, the girls who are left will all be going soon, unless things are made more attractive. They must have——

MISS ARCHER. (*Smiling*) A little excitement!

TONY. (*Embracing her*) You duck! You darling!—You consent?

MISS ARCHER. Certainly not. I couldn't possibly—well, perhaps—Yes, I—I'll think it over!

TONY. Angel! Skip up the back stairs to my room. I'll follow to plan details. (*She pushes Miss*

ARCHER *to door, giving her resounding kiss. Enter MISS SNATCHEM, who catches glimpse of fleeing figure*)

MISS. SNATCHEM. Antoinette, that frightful sound—?

TONY. A kiss. I was kissing——

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Horribly shocked*) Kissing!

TONY. A man.

MISS SNATCHEM. Kissing a *man*? Heavens! where is he? What is he? How did he get in? Help, help!

TONY. Calm yourself, dear Miss Snatchem, I'm sure it can't be good for you to get so excited.

MISS SNATCHEM. But this man?—(*She goes toward door*)

TONY. (*Following and leading her firmly back*) Do you happen to remember my Uncle Theodore who came to see me last year?

MISS SNATCHEM. Perfectly. The very wealthy one with the blond mustache.

TONY. You mean black—at least it's black *this year*! Poor dear Uncle, he is *so* shy! Don't you remember he only stayed ten minutes for fear of meeting the girls?

MISS SNATCHEM. I remember. And so your excellent uncle has come and gone again without my seeing him? Heavens, what a pity! I've had it in mind for some time to give him the privilege of investing a little money—just a few thousands in our plant here. I could have shown him my plans——

TONY. Too bad, but don't worry. I'll write and see what I can do.

MISS SNATCHEM. You dear child, you treasure! What a comfort you are to me, Antoinette,—or would be if you could but learn to control your impetuous disposition. (*Heads of MAUDIE and DOLLY appear in doorway R. In dumb show they*

offer support to TONY in present crisis, she refuses and frantically signals them to retire) Ah, I am not ungrateful. I have not forgotten, Antoinette, that but for you I should not be expecting the heiress, Miss Gottrich, this morning!

TONY. Miss Gottrich! Jiminy-crickets, I'd forgotten all about her! (*To MISS SNATCHEM*) But Miss Snatchem, suppose—suppose she shouldn't come?

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Horried*) Shouldn't come? What—after I have had the piano tuned, three bedrooms and the parlor papered, engaged the new dancing master, had the tennis courts rolled and ice cream placed on the daily menu? After such expense as that to be disappointed? Impossible! (*She sails out L. leaving TONY doubled up with laughter. Enter DOLLY and MAUDIE R. in outdoor dress. They run to front and stand one on each side of TONY, all three linking arms*)

TONY. (*Looking after MISS SNATCHEM*) Oh, dear, oh, dear, I'm up against it now!

DOLLY. What's up, Tony?

MAUDIE. (*Taking apple from pocket and biting it*) Have you been catching it from Snatchy?

DOLLY. (*Filling her mouth with candy from a bag she has taken out of pocket*) Oh, Tony, darling, everybody says you're the naughtiest girl in school!

TONY. (*Helping herself from bag and taking bite of apple*) I'm not the greediest anyway! Girls, you two are my very *dearest* friends, aren't you?

DOLLY and MAUDIE. Of course we are!

TONY. If I tell you a secret will you *promise* not to tell?

MAUDIE. A secret!

DOLLY. Oh, how scrumptious!

DOLLY and MAUDIE. We swear and declare we'll never tell a *living* soul!

TONY. Well, then, listen—this heiress girl who's expected to-day——

MAUDIE. (*Interrupting*) Hurrah! A holiday—ice cream for dinner!

DOLLY. The tennis court's rolled—our best dresses——

TONY. Be quiet, will you? This Angeline, the heiress, is a——

MAUDIE and DOLLY. Is what?

TONY. A myth!

DOLLY and MAUDIE. (*Very reproachfully*) Oh, Tony!

TONY. It was this way. Angie Gottrich *is* my cousin and at one time something *was* said about her coming here. When I told Miss Snatchem I said Angie was crazy about dancing and would be sure to be in time to begin the term. All that was true, though perhaps I did embroider a bit about her fortune, it was such fun to see poor old Snatchy's eyes get bigger and bigger! Well, last week Angie wrote that she had decided to go to Europe. I ought to have told Miss Snatchem at once, but when I saw how she was making just the improvements that are most needed for the good of the dear old school, I—well, I didn't have the heart to say a word!

DOLLY. And *now* what are you going to do?

MAUDIE. You're in a fix *now*, Tony, and serve you right!

TONY. I have an idea. Suppose we get some girl here on a visit and make her play the part of Angie?

MAUDIE and DOLLY. Splendid!

TONY. We'd have all the benefits of an heiress in the home, and meanwhile I'll coax a check for Snatchy out of Uncle Theo.——

DOLLY. That's all very well, but we haven't the girl—(NORA *appears in doorway R. She carries umbrella and carpet bag*)

NORA. (*Coming forward*) Plaze, and wud ye be so kind as to tell me if yez arre wantin' a gurr! here?

TONY. A girl, why—

NORA. 'Tis wan solid hour Oi'm waitin' to see the madam, an' divil an oi hev Oi set on her yet. Oi'm wantin' a place bad, but Oi'll be stippin' along—(*She turns to door*)

TONY. (*Running after her and dragging her front*) No, no, don't go! We—er—we *are* thinking of employing a girl here, that is a girl for—

NORA. (*Setting down bag and putting hands on hips*) For cookin' is it, ye'd want me? Faith, 'tis mesilf can brile the grandest steak—

TONY. We wouldn't want you for *cooking*—

NORA. Sure, 'tis to wait on the table, thin? Oi'm as nate as a pin, yez can tell that jist ter look at me figger! (*Turns round to show off ridiculous figure*)

DOLLY. No, we wouldn't want you to wait on the table,—

NORA. To swape, thin? Och shure, the sight o' dust sets me that disthacted Oi can't bear to be lookin' at it.

MAUDIE. We don't want you to sweep.

NORA. (*Puzzled*) An' phwat the divil will yez be afther havin' me do thin?

TONY. (*Confidentially*) You see, Angie, it's like this—

NORA. Me name's Nora!

TONY. (*Firmly*) Not if you take *this* place. Your name is Miss Angeline Montgomery Gottrich, and you've just arrived from Oskawooska, Michigan, in your own limousine, to be one of Miss

Snatchem's prize pupils. Do you catch on? It doesn't matter if you don't—just keep your eye on me and do exactly as I say. Now, girls, how about her clothes?

DOLLY. Oh, that's easy. I'll turn my coat wrong side out. *(She removes polo coat, reverses it and puts it on NORA, tossing NORA'S old jacket with her hat behind screen)*

MAUDIE. And my hat hind side before—and here's a veil and gloves! *(She puts hat on NORA and throws pink automobile veil over it)*

TONY. That's splendid, but oh, I say, her feet—*(Points dramatically to NORA'S large, ill-shod feet)*

DOLLY. Hush—here they come! *(Enter MISS SNATCHEM with MISS ARCHER and girls)*

MISS SNATCHEM. Eleven-thirty and that dear child is not here yet? What can have happened?

TONY. *(Pushing NORA forward)* Nothing has happened. Miss Snatchem, Miss Archer, girls—allow me to present to you my dear cousin, Miss Angeline Montgomery Gottrich! *(MISS SNATCHEM clasps NORA to her arms, MISS ARCHER turns suspicious eyes on TONY, girls in background all clap hands with delight)*

Curtain.

ACT II.

SCENE :—*Same scene, study-room. Room prepared for dancing, desks removed, and chairs set in row along wall. NORA enters left and bumps into TONY, entering hastily at right.*

TONY. (*Indignantly*) Angie, where have you been? I've been chasing you ever since dinner!

NORA. Och, shure, Oi jist stipped down to the air-way t' have a wurrd wid me cousin, the Policeman.

TONY. The Policeman?

NORA. Shure, we've been kapin' comp'ny this long time, me and him, but he's been houldin' back a bit—the young divil—an' I t'ought af he c'u'd juist see me in this grand dress ye give me—(*Spreads out skirt and admires herself before glass*)

TONY. (*Hiding laughter*) Did he admire you?

NORA. You bet he did! If it hadn't been fer th' Mistress comin' tippin' along, the shly cat she is——

TONY. (*Frightened*) What? She didn't see you?——

NORA. Not she. She tuk wan luik at me cousin's back as he jimped the fince and aff she run, screamin' bluidy murrder an' burrglars——

TONY. Oh, so *that's* what the burglar scare is about! Miss Snatchem's having all the window fastenings examined and she talks of getting a man

to guard the house to-night. The girls are not supposed to know, but of course they've all found out and every one will be afraid to go to bed,—not that we meant to go early, anyway, for we've planned a grand midnight feast, all in honor of your arrival. But come, Angie, it's getting late, and the dancing lesson will begin directly. Go and put on that white dress I laid out on the bed and see if you can't do something with your hair. I wish we could have found a pair of decent shoes to fit you—but perhaps nobody will look at your feet——

NORA. (*Indignant*) Me fate, is it? An' phwat's the matter wid me fate? Oi'll have ye know they're two av' the natest, most iligant fate that iver came over the say! (*She raises skirts to display huge feet*)

TONY. Oh, of course, they are very—unusual! There, never mind, only hurry——

NORA. Ah, phwat's yer hurry? There's wan thing I'm wantin' to ask yez. Phwat about me wages?

TONY. (*Reproachfully*) Wages? Why, Angie, isn't it enough for you to live in this fine house with lots to eat, the choice of all our best clothes to wear, and nothing to do but rest?—and then you have to go worrying me about wages! You ungrateful——

NORA. Divil a bit am I ungrateful! Rist indade! 'Tis a foine rist ye're givin' me;—makin' fun av me pore fate from mornin' to night, squazin' in me waist till 'tis like to burrst, an' plaguin' me head wid askin' me av Oi talk Frinch—Frinch indade!

TONY. (*Soothingly*) There now, don't worry! All you'll have to say to the French dancing master is "*Bonjour, Monsieur,*" and make a low courtesy, like this. (*She courtesies, NORA tries to imitate her, and almost falls flat*)

NORA. Bonjower, bonjower—phwat kind o' mon-

key talk is that at all? Begorrah, this job's wurrth thirrty dollars af it's wurrth a cint——

TONY. Thirty dollars—impossible! We might raise twenty if you'll give us time.——

NORA. 'Dade an' I won't 'Tis married Oi ixpect to be before the wake's out. (*Aside*) And maybe sooner!

TONY. Married! Impossible—I won't hear of such nonsense. There—be off now. (*Stamps her foot and points to door. Exit NORA, tossing her head*) Heavens! If Snatchy had caught her in the arms of the Policeman! Well, anyway, I seem to be getting what I wanted out of this—a little excitement!

(*Enter MISS ARCHER dressed as M. DE BONBON. She is evidently much embarrassed and looks nervously from side to side. As TONY advances she screams and starts.*)

M. DE BONBON. Oh! Oh!

TONY. You darling, how stunning you look! Bonjour, Monsieur! (*She sweeps a curtsey*)

M. DE BONBON. (*Very nervously*) Bonjour, Mademoiselle, I salute you! (*He bows and kisses TONY's hand. She flings her arms around him, then pushes him hastily away as MISS SNATCHEM enters*)

MISS SNATCHEM. Monsieur de Bonbon at last! (*Suspiciously to TONY*) Antoinette, what are you doing here?

TONY. Dear Miss Snatchem, I was just trying my poor little best to make Monsieur feel at home. (*M. DE BONBON, seized by fit of shyness, turns and makes break for door. TONY pursues, grabs him firmly by arm, and leads him back to MISS SNATCHEM*) You see he has so lately left the

shores of sunny France, he's been telling me how homesick he feels. (*Aside to MISS SNATCHEM*) You must'nt be surprised if the poor man acts a bit strangely. He seems to be not quite himself! .

MISS SNATCHEM. (*To M. DE BONBON*). Dear Monsieur, I trust you are feeling able to conduct your class? The young ladies—even *I* myself—would be sadly disappointed——

M. DE BONBON. (*Recovering*) Oh, certainment, I shall be charmed, Mademoiselle! (*Bows and kisses her hand*)

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Looking at him admiringly*) What grace, what elegance! Such an addition as you will be, Monsieur, to our little circle. (*To TONY*) You may go now, Antoinette!

(*TONY retires to door, where she stands a moment, listening and laughing, then goes out.*)

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Gazing fixedly at M. DE BONBON*) Ah, Monsieur, how true is the saying that kindred souls, like twin flames, leap to meet each other! Your face has the strangest effect upon me. I have a feeling that somehow—somewhere—we two have met before! (*Enter EVIE BLAKE, who crosses at back of stage, making eyes at new master. She carries handkerchief ostentatiously in one hand and drops it behind M. DE BONBON as she passes. He sees her, picks up handkerchief, kisses and pockets it*) Evie Blake, leave this room instantly! (*To M. DE BONBON*) Perhaps, Monsieur, in some other life——

M. DE BONBON. Perhaps, Mademoiselle, but pardon, ze young ladies—I sink dey arrive—(*Noise outside of giggling and fluttering*)

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Pressing his hand*) We shall have a chance to talk later? (*Music, a march or*

two-step. Enter the girls, marching two by two. TONY and ANGIE bring up line. ANGIE is eating a banana which TONY vainly tries to get away from her. Girls curtesy as they pass before Dancing Master, then range themselves in line opposite him.) Young ladies, I present M. de Bonbon!

M. DE BONBON. (*Bowing*) Charrmed, Mesdemoiselles!

(*Girls curtesy again.*)

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Beckoning to NORA*) I wish especially to recommend to your notice, Monsieur, our talented new pupil, Miss Angeline Gottrich! (*TONY snatches banana and pushes ANGIE forward. She bobs and M. DE BONBON bows low*) Your movements, dear child, do not possess the grace which your unusual opportunities for culture would have led me to expect. Pay particular attention to the instructions of Monsieur!

M. DE BONBON. Ah, no mattaire. Mademoiselle Angie shall soon bounce wiz ze grace of ze young gazelle! And now, Mesdemoiselles, in line, if you please! Ze music, if you please! We will begin wiz ze waltz step. One, two, three—one, two, three—(*A waltz is played. He dances, girls, except EVIE and ANGIE, imitate his steps. EVIE is slyly throwing him kisses, ANGIE stands in sullen silence till poked by TONY, when she shuffles from side to side in elephantine style*) Excellente! Partners, now, if you please! (*Girls rush forward, hoping to be chosen. He takes EVIE. Rest pair off and dance at back of stage. M. DE BONBON leads EVIE to center front, pauses, takes her handkerchief from his pocket, kisses and replaces it*)

EVIE. Heavens, my handkerchief! (*Stretches hand for it*)

M. DE BONBON. (*In melodramatic tones*) Never! It rests on my heart so—forever!

EVIE. (*Delighted*) I shall swoon—at least I would if Snatchy weren't looking! Pretend to be showing me the step. (*Both dance*)

M. DE BONBON. Can it be with you as with me—that first look?

EVIE. I've read of love at first sight——

M. DE BONBON. How true is the saying that kindred souls, like twin flames, leap to meet each other! Your exquisite face has the strangest effect upon me! I feel that somehow—somewhere we two have met before! Perhaps in some other life—(*TONY takes M. DE BONBON aside, MISS SNATCHEM draws EVIE away*)

TONY. Be careful! Aren't you laying it on a bit thick? Evie Blake is crazy about you already! She's bet her best coral necklace and her new Roman sash you'll propose this very day!

M. DE BONBON. Propose? I'll elope with her! Look here, Tony, if I can make a fool of Evie Blake, it may teach her a lesson that will last the rest of her life!

TONY. (*Giggling*) All right, only don't go too far. If Miss Snatchem finds out——

M. DE BONBON. And what if Miss Snatchem finds out the real name and character of Miss Angeline Montgomery Gottrich, formerly known as Nora O'Halligan?

TONY. Hush! Don't tell, for heaven's sake!

M. DE BONBON. Not if you don't interfere with my little plan for disciplining Evie! Ah, Mademoiselle! (*She takes a turn about stage with ANGIE, who is pushed forward by MISS SNATCHEM. ANGIE trips and falls flat. TONY and M. DE BONBON haul her to chair and fan her frantically, while girls*

group themselves in background, MISS SNATCHEM bending solicitously over ANGIE)

TONY. There, give her air! I forgot to tell you about her weak heart!

MISS SNATCHEM. And her long journey—I shouldn't have permitted such exertion. Dear child, you must rest! A cup of tea——

NORA. (*Springing to her feet*) Shure, Oi'll have a cup o' tay, guid and sthrong, wid a biled igg and a pertaty to it, an' a glass o' beer if ye have ony handy!

TONY. I'll take her to the dining room. (*She hustles ANGIE out*)

MISS SNATCHEM. Young ladies, you are excused. Salute Monsieur and retire. (*Music. Girls march out, curtsying as they pass M. DE BONBON, who kisses his hand to EVIE*) At last we are alone. Ah, Monsieur, you cannot conceive what a joy it is for a frail little creature like myself to feel that a man's strong arm is near to lean upon! (*Takes his arm and leans on him*) Yes, even now danger is at hand——

M. DE BONBON. (*Holding her off and glancing nervously about*) Danger?

MISS SNATCHEM. Yes, this very day a base intruder—a *burglar*—was discovered trying to invade these peaceful premises!

M. DE BONBON. (*Drawing away from her*) A burglar! Heavens! Mademoiselle will excuse—it is time I return to ze city.

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Clinging to him*) No. no, I cannot let you go. You must sup with me at least. Ah, if you were only here *to stay*!

M. DE BONBON. To stay?

(*TONY appears in doorway left. At right heads of DOLLY and MAUDIE are seen. The three girls*

exchange winks and nods during situation that follows.)

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Languishingly*) Yes, as my partner, my defender, my——

M. DE BONBON. (*Helplessly*) Your *what?*

MISS SNATCHEM. My—Can't you guess? My husband! (*She flings herself into his arms*)

Curtain.

ACT III.

SCENE:—*Same scene as Act II. Shaded lamp on small table at back of stage. Table at front on left holds china wash bowl and half a dozen china tooth mugs. Enter NORA in hat and coat over white dress. She drags bag which is so full that it bursts open, fan, gloves, silver-backed mirror dropping out.*

NORA. (*Stuffing fan and gloves back in bag*) Ah, sthay in there, will yez? Thim gurrils will niver miss a few trinkets! (*She picks up mirror and studies herself in it*) Faith, it's the foine-looker Oi am in these duds! (*MIKE appears in doorway, his finger to lips. NORA starts and drops mirror*)

MIKE. Sst! Are ye ready? (*He comes toward her. She screams*)

NORA. (*Embracing him*) Mike, me darlint, is it yersilf? Shure, jist fer a jiffy I tought ye wuz the burrglar they're all talkin' about!

MIKE. I'm not so sure there's no burrglar here, Nory! (*He looks around nervously*) There's a bit av a rope danglin' from a windy upstairs, an' the back door was wide open. The Cap he sint me round to inspict the premises, but 'tis no wan man job this! Come on, Nory darlint, this is no place fer us at all, at all! (*He grabs bag, seizes NORA*)

by arm and leads her toward door. Noise is heard outside. Voice calls "Angie!" MIKE drops bag in fright)

NORA. Whist! 'Tis too late! Thim young divils are comin'. Hide ye there! (*She pushes MIKE behind screen, strips off her coat and flings it after him. Enter EVIE, dressed in cloak, picture hat, etc., looking nervously around. She sees NORA, screams and starts in melodramatic style*)

EVIE. Oh, Angie, where are you going?

NORA. Where am I goin'? An' phwat's that to ye? (*She throws hat after coat. MIKE, bobbing up from behind screen, catches it on head, and dives again*)

EVIE. (*Striding up and down stage*) After all, do I dare? Oh, my heart, my heart! (*Clasps hands on breast*)

NORA. Yer hearrt, is it? Shure, 'tis ye're sthumnick that's troublin' ye! 'Tis thim three paces o' pie ye ate fer yer dinner the night——

EVIE. Oh, be still, Angie! How can *your* gross undeveloped nature grasp the wild sweetness of first love? For Love, Angie Gottrich, I would throw the world away!

NORA. (*Coldly, looking at herself in mirror*) Ye don't say? An' who's the feller?

EVIE. (*Coyly*) Can't you guess? Did you notice nothing this afternoon?

NORA. Phwat! Ye don't mane ye'd be afther runnin' aff wid that little double-jinted, fish-faced frawg av a Frinchman? Him wid the tread av a cat an' the vice av a canary?

EVIE. (*Drawing herself up*) I mean our new dancing master, M. de Bonbon.

NORA. Bedad, thin, if 'twas me Oi'd rather have a man!

(MIKE'S head bobs up and they exchange winks.)

EVIE. You're jealous. But come now, Angie, don't you *really* and *truly* think he's worth giving up one's *all* for?

NORA. Dade an' I don't thin! Be aff to bed an' don't be makin' a fool of yersilf entirely!

EVIE. I can't give him up—and yet—well, anyway, I've got till midnight to make up my mind! (*She runs out left as girls on tiptoe, giggling, enter at right. They wear kimonos, boudoir caps, etc. Some carry lighted candles, one a chafing dish, one a spoon, etc. They place things on table left, then, seeing ANGIE, they take hands and dance softly round her, she struggling to break through circle*)

NORA. Let me go, thin, I say! (*Girls break circle*)

DOLLY. Don't be ungrateful, Angie darling! This is *your* party, and we're taking this frightful risk all for *your* sake!

MAUDIE. But where is Tony? She ought to be back from the village by this time!

ETHEL. Suppose something's happened to her? Suppose she's been caught?

(*Enter TONY, her arms full of bundles.*)

TONY. Caught? Not your Tony! (*Girls rush to welcome her*)

GIRLS. Oh, oh, we were so worried!

TONY. (*Standing center, girls in two groups on either side*) I did have a race for it! Jones' dog took a flying bite at my heels as I jumped the last fence. But here I am, girls, safe and sound!

ROSALIE. Did you bring the lemon drops?

CLARE. And the pickled oysters?

MILLCENT. And the marshmallows?

HILDA. And the canned lobster?

MADGE. And the cheese and the chocolate and the chewing gum?

TONY. (*Giving up parcels*) Yes—everything—and here's a surprise! (*Hands box to MAUDIE*)

MAUDIE. First peep! Oh, Tony—ice cream—you perfect dear!

GIRLS. Ice cream! (*They snatch box and pass it from one to another*)

TONY. (*Fanning herself with cap*) It's pretty soft. Chuck it in the wash bowl, somebody. Girls, bring your tooth mugs!

(*Two girls move table center front. Others, holding mugs, seat themselves cross-legged on floor in two groups, left and right. TONY, sitting on table, dishes ice cream out of wash bowl into tooth mugs, talking meanwhile.*)

TONY. Now isn't this great?

DOLLY. (*Her mouth full*) Splendid! It's the grandest, dandiest feast we've ever had!

GIRLS. Simply spiffing!

TONY. Haven't seen anything of the Burglar, have you?

MAUDIE. (*Jumping up and looking round room*) Oh, oh, don't! I'd forgotten all about him!

TONY. (*Teasingly*) He may be in the house at this very minute—perhaps hiding in this very room.

(*Girls all scream and spring to feet. ANGIE backs up against screen.*)

DOLLY. (*Beginning to cry*) Oh, I want to go back to bed and hide under the covers!

ANGIE. Faith, that's the furrst wurrd av sinse I've heard ye spake the night! Ah go on now to yer beds, will yez? (*She looks imploringly at TONY*)

TONY. Nonsense, Angie, it's not polite of you to want to break up your party. Sit down, girls.

(*Girls sit*) No burglar can scare *me*! Say, hasn't this been a perfect day?

ETHEL. Spiffing! Simply creamy!

DOLLY. First there was Angie, and then our new master——

MAUDIE. Isn't he a sweet?

DOLLY. And now this gorgeous feast,—not to speak of the fun of feeling that we may be nabbed at any minute by Snatchy—or the Burglar!

GIRLS. Oh, oh! (*They look anxiously over shoulders*)

DOLLY. I'm going to propose a toast—in melted ice cream.

(*Girls rise to feet and wave mugs.*)

DOLLY. To our Tony—Tony the Terror—the jolliest girl in School!

GIRLS. Hurrah! Speech, speech!

(*TONY stands on table to reply.*)

TONY. Girls, I—I don't know what to say, except that I love you every one and—(*Loud sneeze is heard and MIKE's head appears above screen. NORA wildly motions him back*)

TONY. (*Seeing him*) The Burglar! Fly! Run for your lives!

(*Girls all follow TONY out right. Enter EVIE R. Enter M. DE BONBON left. MIKE, with NORA clinging to him, ducks back behind screen at sight of them.*)

M. DE BONBON. My adored one! (*He clasps EVIE in arms*) Come, all is ready! The rope ladder swings from yonder window! The post-chaise waits

outside the garden gate. Come! (*He seizes her by arm, leading her toward door*)

EVIE. No, no—wait! I—I think I've changed my mind!

M. DE BONBON. What? Do you no longer love me?

EVIE. (*Sobbing*) Of course. I just adore you! But somehow—eloping isn't half—so much fun—as I thought it would be!

M. DE BONBON. Too late, too late! (*He makes a dash at EVIE, who screams and backs into the arms of MISS SNATCHEM, who enters from left. She wears striped wrapper, curl papers, etc. Carries poker*)

MISS SNATCHEM. Heavens! Who's this? (*She makes a grab at M. DE BONBON—who at sight of her turns and tries to run out right but is stopped by entrance of girls, headed by TONY. They are armed with umbrellas, tennis racquets, hair brushes, curling tongs, etc. MISS SNATCHEM pushes EVIE aside, seizes M. DE BONBON by coat tail and pulls him around stage*)

MISS SNATCHEM. Villain! Miscreant! Wretch!

EVIE. (*Holding her back*) Don't blame him! I suggested our elopement.

MISS SNATCHEM. Elopement! An elopement in my school? (*Turning on M. DE BONBON*) And you?—Quick, girls, the telephone! Fetch the police!

M. DE BONBON. No, no, it's a mistake, all a mistake! (*To MISS SNATCHEM*) Give me one moment alone and I'll explain!

MISS SNATCHEM. Impossible. The police.

(*MIKE knocks over screen and stands revealed, NORA clinging to him.*)

MIKE. (*Touching his hat*) Here's the police, Ma'am!

MISS SNATCHEM. Horrors!

GIRLS. The Burglar!

MIKE. I ain't no burglar, beggin' yer pardon, Ma'am. 'Twas the Cap at the Station House sint me to take a look at the premises, an' findin' the back door open I stepped in——

MISS SNATCHEM. (*Sternly*) Why did you hide behind that screen? And what—*what* are you doing with your arm around that young lady? Loose her instantly!

MIKE. Beggin' yer pardon, Ma'am, this ain't no young lady.

MISS SNATCHEM. What—Miss Angeline Gott-rich——

MIKE. (*Firmly*) No, Ma'am, Miss Nory O'Halligan an' me promised wife. 'Twas to-night we was to be married, but seein' she's waited some time she can wait a bit longer while I'm nabbin' this feller—(*He makes dash at M. DE BONBON, who has been trying to edge toward door*)

MISS SNATCHEM. Stop! Don't hurt him! After all, I won't have him arrested. Poor misguided man!

MIKE. (*Struggling with M. DE BONBON, who shrieks and squirms*) Man? Man is it? Divil a bit av a man! (*He pulls off MISS ARCHER's hat, wig, and mustache, her hair falls about shoulders*) Here, Miss. Here's your husband! (*Pushes MISS ARCHER towards EVIE, who screams and covers face with hands. Girls all laugh. MISS SNATCHEM sinks into chair center*)

MISS SNATCHEM. Can any one tell me what all this means?

TONY. (*Kneeling beside her*) It means that everything—all this frightful mix-up is the fault of

one naughty girl, your Tony! I got Miss Archer to play the part of M. de Bonbon so that she might teach some of us dancing, and one of us a lesson that was far more needed. (*She looks toward EVIE*) It was I who made Nora pretend to be Angie so—so you wouldn't be disappointed and I could have time to get help for you from Uncle Theo. And there was one more other reason for all this mischief. We wanted—Girls, tell her what we wanted!

MISS ARCHER. (*Interrupting*) A little excitement!

GIRLS. (*Waving racquets, umbrellas, etc.*) Yes, yes, a little excitement!

(*Tableau. MISS SNATCHEM center. EVIE standing at L. TONY kneeling at R. MISS ARCHER standing at left. Girls in two groups R. and L. NORA and MIKE embracing in background.*)

CURTAIN.



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